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ABSTRACT

This paper evaluates the language policy of India and its implementation with a special focus on English language teaching (ELT). In the first part of the paper, India's language policy is chronicled from the pre-independence period through the nationalist movement and post-independence era, with attention to the language policies of the individual states and overall implementation. A second section examines language planning in education and the policy towards English in primary and secondary schools and in universities. The actual use of English in the Indian social and educational context is then reviewed, highlighting its use in public administration, the print media, the electronic media, the production of English-language books, business and industry, social circles, and creative writing. In addition, the use of English as the medium of instruction at each educational level is described, the functions of English and Indian languages are compared, and the mismatch between language policy and language use is discussed. The third and final section of the paper, an examination of the ELT situation, addresses its stated and implicit aims, the syllabuses, methods, and materials used, the teacher supply, and recent developments in ELT planning. It is concluded that the absence of a clearly-stated and uniform policy results from a mismatch of official languages and language use. Forty references are provided. (MSE)

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LANGUAGE POLICY, LANGUAGE USE AND ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING IN INDIA

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1.0 Introduction

My aim in this paper is to evaluate the language policy of India and its implementation with a special focus on English language teaching. My conceptual framework derives from recent work done in the field of language planning. As Fishman (1974:1758) suggests sociolinguistic study of language planning as a whole "enables us to appreciate the societal complexity impinging on the determination, implementation and evaluation of language policy as a whole. The study of language planning is the study of organized efforts to find solutions to societal language problems." In addition to standardization of languages, language planning effort is concerned with the manipulation of both the structure and the functional allocation of languages/varieties within a polity. Language teaching and learning in any society has to be planned within the broad framework of the national educational policy, keeping in view the national, societal and individual aspirations of the people. It has been suggested that "second language teaching programmes or bilingual education programmes will not succeed or thrive unless they are consistent with governmental policies, whether explicit or implicit, or with the carefully and clearly expressed goals of local educational authorities" (Tucker 1979:207). The language teaching profession should, therefore, assess and evaluate the implications of language policy while planning and designing language teaching curricula.

1.1 India's language policy

Two major sectors of national life which affect and are affected by language policy are public administration and education. In the sphere of administration there is the question of an official language: What language or languages should be used in government administration? In the field of education there is the question of what language or languages should serve as the media of education and at what stages, and what language or languages should be taught at the various levels. The two spheres are closely interrelated. A language that is made an official

language gradually occupies an important position in school curricula. At the same time, the nature of programmes implemented in terms of the medium of education and languages taught as subjects also indirectly influence the prospects of change in the official language. Any language planning effort undertaken by official or non-official agencies is therefore directed at these two spheres of national life.

1.1.1 The pre-independence period

Macaulay's Minute passed on February 2, 1835, proclaimed the official language policy of the British government. It aimed at "forming a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern -- a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinion, in morals and in intellect" (Sharp 1920:116). Other factors which contributed to the planting of English firmly in the country were the establishment of three universities in 1857 -- Bombay, Calcutta and Madras -- followed by a few more by the end of the 19th century, several English-medium schools and the English press. Furthermore, since English was not identified with any regional or communal group, it soon became the lingua franca of the elite groups replacing Sanskrit and Persian.

1.1.2 The nationalist movement

In Mahatma Gandhi's view Hindi written in Devanagiri or Persian script met all the requirements for becoming the official language of India. He was equally insistent on the use of the regional languages as the media of education and as the official languages of the states. Although this became the language policy of the Indian National Congress in 1925 (Kumaramangalam 1965), it failed to acquire popular acceptance. Generally, loyalty was either for Hindi or Urdu, both inside the Congress Party and outside of it. Moreover, the Muslim League "was committed to making Urdu alone the language that should be propagated throughout India" (Nayar 1969:61). But the number of English-educated people kept growing year after year through English education (Table 1: 'A'), in spite of political agitation against the British and the Hindi-Urdu controversy.

Table 1

Institutions of higher learning and student enrolment

Year	No. of universities	No. of students enrolled
'A' Pre-independence period		
1891-92	5	12,000
1901-02	5	17,651
1911-12	5	29,648
1921-22	14	45,175
1931-32	16	79,139
1946-47	20	256,000
'B' Post-independence period		
1949-50	27	383,000
1958-59	40	959,000
1965-66	68	1,728,773
1971-72	86	2,858,077
1975-76	121	3,400,000

(Compiled from NCERT, 1965, UGC 1976 Times of India 1978)

Out of the 20 universities that existed in India at the time of its independence only one, Osmania, had an indigenous language (Urdu) as the medium of instruction. All others were imparting instruction through the medium of English and Osmania too switched to English soon after independence to conform to the all-India pattern. The figures of school enrolment during the pre-independence period are not available. However, one can guess that there must have been a similar rise in the number of students enrolling themselves at primary and secondary schools. Since job opportunities in the administration of the 'Raj' were limited only to English-educated class, a lot of prestige began to be attached to the knowledge of English.

Thus the pre-independence period was an era of British patronage to English. The spread of English was slightly checked by the national movement. But the presence of the British on the sub-continent and the use of English in administration, business, banking, industry, mass media and education counterbalanced the nationalist feeling and established it firmly on the Indian soil.

1.1.3 The post-independence era

The Constitution of India, which became effective in 1950, provided that the official language of the Union should be Hindi in Devanagiri script with international numerals.[1] It also provided for a period of 15 years for the continuation of English for all official purposes. Some of the salient features of the Constitution with regard to language policy are:

a) the long-range aim of the constitutional settlement was to replace English by Hindi as the sole official language of the Union;

b) in view of many difficulties involved in changing the official language, it adopts a gradualist approach towards the replacement of English by Hindi;

c) it excludes certain areas of official life from coming within its provisions even after the fifteen-year period, e.g., law courts and framing of official statues;

d) it is concerned with certain areas of official and public life and does not prescribe any language for private sector (business, industry, mass media, literature) or semi-private sector (e.g., education);

e) it gives freedom to the states to adopt any of the languages included in the Eighth Schedule as their official languages;

f) it guarantees several major rights to linguistic minorities including English-speakers.

In spite of the constitutional provisions, Hindi could never become the sole official language of the Union. There has been strong opposition to its adoption from several groups in the country. However, the Official Language Commission appointed in 1955 observed that

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[1] Hindi got 78 votes and Hindustani 77, inspite of Nehru's or Gandhi's support for the latter.

> the linguistic settlement embodied in the constitutional provisions is the best arrangement considering all the complexities of the situation. Indeed, apart from the apprehension that the fifteen-year period might be found to be too short and may have to be extended, the vast majority of responsible opinion received by us endorses the provisions of the constitutional settlement.
>
> (Government of India 1957:40)

It, therefore, made a number of recommendations for the introduction of Hindi (in addition to English) in various spheres of government. But no time schedule for the introduction of Hindi and displacement of English was furnished. Of course, there were dissent notes from two members, Suniti Kumar Chatterjee from West Bengal and P. Subbarayan from Tamil Nadu, pleading for the continued use of English as the sole official language.

When the Report of the Official Language Commission was reviewed by the Committee of Parliamant on Official Language, it held the deadline of 1965 to be impracticable and recommended that English should continue to be used as the official language along with Hindi for an indefinite period:

> The Committee considers that until 1965, English should be the principal official language of the Union and Hindi the subsidiary language; and from 1965 when Hindi becomes the principal official language, English should be used as a subsidiary official language for purposes to be specified by Parliament by law in due course for as long as may be necessary.
>
> (Government of India 1959:13)

Therefore, a Presidential order issued in 1960 proclaimed that English would remain the 'principal' official language until 1965; after 1965, it would continue as the 'subsidiary' official language. The order asked that "no restrictions should be imposed for the present on the use of English for any purposes of the Union" and directed that provisions be made for "the continued use of English even after 1965 for purposes to be specified by Parliamant by law as long as may be necessary" (Government of India 1960).

What followed is an intensification of the already existing language controversy, dividing the country into two linguistic camps -- the supporters and the opponents of Hindi. The Presidential order of 1960 was followed by the Official Languages Act in 1963. It removed the constitutional directive for the elimination of English and at the same time accorded Hindi the status of official language. In fact, the 1963 Act broadened the scope of the Presidential order of 1960 by providing that the use of English may continue for "all the official purposes of the Union for which it was being used" (Government of India 1963). However, neither the Pro-Hindi nor the anti-Hindi groups were satisfied and violent demonstrations against Hindi in the South and English in the north followed. There was intense political activity which finally resulted in the enactment of the Official Languages (Amendment) Act 1967. It provides that English may, in addition to Hindi, continue to be used in all such official work of the Union for which it was being used before 1955 as well as in the business of the Parliament. It also specified in some detail the official purposes for which English shall continue to be used in addition to Hindi:

a) resolutions, general orders, rules, notifications, administrative or other reports or press communiques issued or made by the central government and its agencies or corporations;

b) administrative and other reports and official papers placed before Parliament;

c) contracts and agreements executed, and licences, permits, notices and forms of tender issued by the central government and its agencies and corporations.

For communications between the Union and the states and between one state and another the Act lays down that

a) English shall be used between the Union and a non-Hindi state, and

b) English translations shall accompany Hindi communications from Hindi to non-Hindi states.

These two acts lay down the official position of language policy within the constitutional provisions as far as the Union of India is concerned. Hindi in Devanagiri script has become the official language of the Union from 1965 while English continues to be the 'associate' official

language for purposes specified without any time limit being imposed for a complete switchover to Hindi.

1.1.4 Language policies of the states

The constitutional provisions give freedom to the states of the Union to adopt Hindi or any other language as their official languages. The switchover in the Hindi-speaking states to Hindi took place rather quickly. The Official Language Commission (1956) observed that the Hindi states had progressed further than non-Hindi states in displacing English from the position of their sole official language. The non-Hindi states have been rather slow and cautious in switching to regional languages. However, most states and union territories have adopted the language of the region as their official language. English continues to be the official language in some states and union territories.

1.1.5 Policy implementation

The actual task of implementing the Union government's policy is carried out mainly by government agencies. It requires the investment of huge sums of money which are made available by the government. Large proportions of this money are used to employ thousands of Hindi teachers, experts and authors. The actual output of these personnel "has been oriented more toward contribution in quantity than quality. Success has been measured by the number of terms, volumes, schools, incentives and even programmes" (Das Gupta 1970:169).

Clear-cut objective criteria for evaluating the language policy of a country are not available yet. However, some suggestions have been made (Ray 1963 and Haugen 1966). Ray draws attention to three components that should go into language planning: efficiency, rationality and commonality. Although Hindi planners seem to be aware of these criteria, the question of efficiency has been made subservient to purity of language borne out of national pride. Similarly, rationality is perceived by them as a criterion which can be met by Sanskritizing the language. As regards commonality, their attitude tends to be more prescriptive than functional, oriented towards the creation of a formal structure of an ideal Hindi usage. As a result, there has been a lot of

resistance to the adoption of Hindi for official purposes not only in non-Hindi areas but also in certain pockets of the Hindi region.

1.2 Language planning in education and the policy towards English

One of the most powerful agencies of policy implementation is the educational system. It is therefore necessary to examine some of the important policy pronouncements concerning the educational system of India to present a picture of language policy for schools and universities. Since India is a multilingual nation with a federal set-up and education is a state responsibility, a national perspective on educational policy should emerge out of a consensus arrived at among the states within the general guidelines provided by the federal authority. However, there are bound to be variations in different states as far as the medium, content and duration of educational stages are concerned.

1.2.1 Language policy for primary schools

The directive principles of the Indian Constitution lay emphasis on free and compulsory education for all children until the age of fourteen. Although these objectives have not been achieved, tremendous strides towards their fulfilment have been made. As regards the primary stage, the Constitution accepts the principle of mother tongue as the medium of instruction as well as the language to be studied. Children belonging to linguistic minorities also have this constitutional guarantee. Thus, the question of teaching a second language, Hindi (in non-Hindi regions) and/or English does not arise. In areas where the regional language is different from the child's mother tongue, the policy is that instruction in the regional language should not be introduced earlier than class III.

1.2.2 Language policy for secondary schools

Since the beginning of the modern educational system, there has been a controversy over the linguistic medium of education at the secondary and university levels. During the pre-independence days the teaching of English came to be

regarded as the prime object at the secondary school stage. English was taught as a compulsory subject and was also the medium of instruction and examination at the high school level.

After independence, the accepted policy of Indian languages as the media of instruction was adopted. Since Hindi became the Union's official language, there have been attempts to accommodate both Hindi and English in the school curricula. Several committees and commissions made varying recommendations. In 1953, the Secondary Education Commission recommended that the medium of instruction throughout the secondary stage should be the mother tongue or the regional language, but both Hindi and English should be taught during the middle school (lower secondary) stage (Government of India 1953). This was found to be unsatisfactory by educationists because it meant that students in Hindi-speaking areas would get the opportunity to study both Hindi and English, while those in the non-Hindi areas could study either Hindi or English. The Official Language Commission also suggested that three or four years of the study of Hindi and at least five years of English at school be made essential.

Meanwhile, the educationists were puzzled over the ticklish language problem which they attempted to solve by evolving a formula that would be acceptable to all the states. In 1955, the All-India Council for Secondary Education arrived at a 'three language formula' with a view to equalising the burden of language learning among the different linguistic groups. A Conference of the Chief Ministers of all the states accepted it and recommended that the following three languages should be taught at the secondary stage:

1. the regional language, and if the mother tongue is different from the regional language, then also the mother tongue;
2. Hindi in non-Hindi areas, and another Indian language in Hindi areas; and
3. English or another modern European language.

Of course, the Chief Ministers made a major modification in the formula by including 'Indian language' in place of a 'modern Indian language' in 2 above. This modification gave an advantage to Hindi-speaking areas, for most of them introduced Sanskrit to save the students the trouble of learning a non-Hindi language. The disparity was soon felt and the Education Commission 1964-66 recommended the study of the following three languages:

1. mother tongue or regional language;

2. official language of the Union (i.e., Hindi), or associate official language (i.e., English), as long as it had that status; and

3. any modern Indian or foreign language not covered in 1 or 2 above.

(Government of India 1966)

Although the debate on this issue is still on, the Government of India has made it known its determination to press for the implementation of the formula throughout the country. However, the State governments have made certain modifications.

1.2.3 Language policy for universities

The question of language policy for higher education is mainly concerned with the medium of instruction. During the pre-independence period, English was the sole language of instruction. It was only after 1947 that the question of the replacement of English by modern Indian languages as media of instruction was raised. The University Education Commission, appointed in 1948 recommended a switch to regional languages as media of instruction in the interest of education and general welfare of a democratic community. At the same time it suggested that English should continue to be taught in secondary school and university, at least enough to "impart the ability to read books in English, to keep in touch with the living stream of evergrowing knowledge. ... and as our principal means of maintaining contact with the outside world" (Government of India 1950: 321-322). Later the Official Language Commission (1956) also considered the question and warned that although the trend towards replacing English by the regional languages as media of education was quite unmistakable, there should be no precipitancy about it.

The views expressed by these two commissions have since been echoed by almost every official body that investigated the issue. For example, the Kunzru Committee recommended that

a. the change from English to an Indian Language as the medium of instruction at the university stage should not be hastened;

b. even when a change in the medium of instruction is made, English should continue to be studied by all university students.

(quoted in UGC 1965:38)

In sum, the main stand of the official bodies is that education should be imparted through the regional languages:

> as matter of sound educational policy, the medium of education in school and higher education should generally be the same.... As we have rightly adopted the regional languages as the media of education at the school stage, it follows that we should adopt them increasingly at the higher stage also.
>
> (Government of India 1966:22)

But at the same time

> no student should be considered as qualified for a degree, in particular a master's degree, unless he has acquired a reasonable proficiency in English (or in some other library language).
>
> (ibid.:528)

2.0 The use of English in Indian social and educational context

India's language policy pronouncements examined in the preceding sections would give one of the impression that English has a limited role to play in the country, an associate official language, a library language and a language of contact with the outside world. But the actual extent of the use of English covers many more spheres of activity in the Indian socio-cultural and educational context.

Although English is not included in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution, it is the mother tongue of more than 200,000 people.[1] In addition, according to a rough estimate (Parasher 1979), there must be over 25 million people in India

[1] According to 1981 Census.

who have learned some amount of English as a second language. As Ferguson (1966) suggests a language can be considered a major language of a given country if it fulfils any one or more of the following criteria:

a. It is spoken as a native language by more than 25 per cent of the population or by more than 1,000,000 people.

b. It is an official language of the nation.

c. It is the language of education of over 50 per cent of the secondary school graduates of the nation.

Since English is the 'associate' official language of the Union of India, it fulfils criteria (b) straightaway. It can therefore be argued that English is a major language of India. In addition, it is used for certain specific purposes by millions of people as a second language. In a large number of 'English medium' secondary schools it is the medium of education too.

2.1.1 English in public administration

Although the policy statements say that English is an associate official language, "it is English that in practice is the official language at the Union level and it is likely to continue as such for an indefinite period" (Nayar 1969:137). The situation has not changed much since then. In addition, English is the sole official language of a few states and union territories of India. In others it continues to be used liberally at higher levels of administration. English is the major language used in the proceedings of the houses of Indian Parliament.

In spite of the policy decisions, English continues to dominate government publications. The largest number of publications are still in English (Table 2).

Table 2

Language-wise distribution of the publications brought out by the Government of India in 1983

Language	No. of publications	Percentage to total
English	171	53.27
Hindi	58	18.06
Other Indian Languages[1]	46	14.33
Bilingual and Multilingual	28	8.72
Unclassified	18	5.60

(Government of India 1984:144)

[1] These include publications in Assamese, Bengali, Gujarati, Kannada, Malayalam, Marathi, Oriya, Tamil, Telugu and Urdu.

Further, according to a constitutional provision (Article 348), the authoritative texts of the following kinds of documents are always in English:

a) bills to be introduced or amendments therein to be moved in either house of Parliament or in either house of the legislature of a state;

b) all acts passed by Parliament or the legislature of a state and all ordinances promulgated by the President of India or the Governor of a state; and

c) all orders, rules, regulations and bye-laws issued under the Constitution or under law made by Parliament or the legislature of a state.

The proceedings of the Supreme Court of India and High Courts have to be in English, again under constitutional provisions. The language of the lower courts is Hindi or the language of the region. Most of the lawyers and judges, educated through the medium of English, prefer to use English for arguments and writing judgements.

2.1.2 English in the print media

Outside public administration, the English press in India is an important factor in the diffusion of English bilingualism. The English press in the country is by far the best established and most influential. A Ministry of Information and Broadcasting source indicates that the number of English newspapers (dailies, weeklies, etc.), published in India is next only to those in Hindi and higher than any other Indian language. In terms of circulation English newspapers are almost on a par with Hindi (Table 3). However, some of the most influential English dailies, with a circulation of 100,000 copies and above per day, have much higher circulation figures than dailies in any Indian language (Table 4).

Table 3

Language-wise distribution and circulation of daily newspapers and periodicals in India in 1983

Language	Daily Newspapers		Periodicals	
	No.	Circulation in thousands (per day)	No.	Circulation in thousands
Hindi	470	4,537	5439	10,897
English	123	3,349	3704	7,268
Assamese	3	70	78	347
Bengali	44	1,113	1530	2,336
Gujarati	40	1,099	684	1,625
Kannada	85	493	567	1,425
Kashmiri	--	--	1	--
Malayalam	112	1,528	728	3,390
Marathi	127	1,229	987	1,420
Oriya	14	227	285	337
Punjabi	24	302	427	916
Sanskrit	2	2	29	9
Sindhi	6	36	59	488
Tamil	106	1,067	747	3,581
Telugu	37	630	544	1,650
Urdu	148	940	1224	1,586
Bilingual	33	49	1593	1,216
Multilingual	9	12	345	238
Others	40	48	256	153

(Government of India, 1984)

Table 4

Language-wise distribution of dailies with circulation of more than 100,000 copies per publication day

Language	Titles of Newspaper	Total Circulation
English	Times of India (Bombay and Delhi), Hindustan Times, Hindu, Statesman, Tribune, Amrit Bazar Patrika, Statesman, Deccan Herald, Indian Express	1,643,692
Malayalam	Malayala Manorama (Kottayam, Cochin and Calicut), Mathurbhumi (Cochin and Calicut), Kerala Kaumudi	954,074
Hindi	Nav Bharat Times, Punjab Kesari, Hindustan, Nai Duniya, Jagran	941,662
Bengali	Anand Bazar Patrika, Jugantar	730,040
Gujarati	Bombay Samachar, Gujarat Samachar, Sandesh	499,123
Marathi	Loksatta, Maharashtra Times	392,493
Kannada	Prajavani	194,657
Tamil	Dinamani	113,182
Telugu	Eenaadu	132,316

(Government of India 1984)

Moreover, the English press is wider in news coverage and more cosmopolitan in views than its Indian language counterparts. The regional language press gives more coverage to regional news and deals with regional problems in its editorial comments and leading articles. The English language newspaper tries to argue on national or international problems and reaches a wider audience. In terms of geographical distribution, English dailies are published from all the states and union territories except Arunachal Pradesh and Dadra and Nagar Haveli.

2.1.3 English in the electronic media

A very liberal use of English is made in the electronic media in India. The All India Radio and Doordarshan in New Delhi and its stations in different parts of the country use English and Hindi along with the regional languages. All the national news bulletins are both in Hindi and English. The commentaries, features, talks, discussions, interviews etc focussing on several national and international matters are usually in English, as they are aimed at an all-India audience. In addition, the UGC programmes telecast under the countrywide-classroom scheme are in English. The AIR and Doordarshan stations often include western music too in their programmes.

Furthermore, the AIR and Doordarshan play an important role in teaching English. According to a brochure of the Central Institute of English and Foreign Languages, Hyderabad, 23 AIR stations broadcast lessons for schools every week day during term time, each lesson being of 20 minutes' duration. Several television programmes for teaching English produced at this Institute are regularly telecast on the television. A large number of people listen to the BBC and the Voice of America. Some of the BBC's English teaching programmes for South Asia have a wide audience in the country.

2.1.4 Production of books in English

Books play an important role in national communication. The figures of book production, therefore, indicate the general trend in people's reading habits. As Isreal (1978:59) observes "in terms of number of titles published annually India stands third, after the United States and Britain." About 43 per cent of books produced in India are in English.[1] A comparison of the figures of books production for the past few years indicates that the number of books published in English is not only higher than Hindi, but also almost equal to all the other major Indian languages put together (Table 5).

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[1]According to a national news bulletin on Doordarshan.

Table 5

Book production in English and other major Indian languages (1969-1982)

Year	English	Hindi	Other major Indian languages	Percentage of books in English
1969	4842	2723	6051	35.26
1970	4666	2641	6758	33.04
1971	5429	1871	6214	39.92
1972	5723	2794	5914	39.60
1973	6183	1814	5978	44.75
1974	5501	1158	4677	47.52
1975	4700	1697	6188	37.20
1976	6733	2235	6696	42.82
1977	5663	1858	5364	43.95
1979 1980	Not available			
1981	5145	1276	5141	44.49
1982	4313	1221	5084	39.47

(Compiled from UNESCO's Statistical Yearbooks 1967 to 1986)

As regards the production of professional journals, English is the most dominant language. An examination of the annual reports of the Registrar of Newspapers in India shows that most of the periodicals devoted to science, technology, social sciences, business and industry are published in English while Hindi and other Indian languages dominate religion, philosophy and current affairs (Table 6).

Table 6

Subject-wise classification of periodicals published in English, Hindi and other Indian Languages in 1983

Subject	English	Hindi	Other Indian Languages	Bilingual	Multilingual	% in English
Engineering and Technology	109	2	9	13	1	91.4
Science	93	7	17	--	-	79.4
Law and Public Administration	103	6	16	9	-	76.8
Commerce and Industry	173	20	23	30	5	68.9
Education	37	14	49	18	7	29.6
Religion and Philosophy	126	140	307	94	33	18.0
News and Current Affairs	279	1210	1149	145	15	9.9

(Government of India 1984)

2.1.5 English in business and industry

English is the working language of organized business, industry, banking and insurance. Most company announcements, advertisements, reports, contracts and correspondence are in English. A cursory look at the advertisement columns of any national daily would show that for jobs such as managerial staff, technical personnel, sales representatives, secretaries and even junior assistants a good command of English is required. The job interviews are conducted in English and those who have a high proficiency in English, in addition to other job requirements, are usually selected. All nationalised banks, finance and insurance corporations and public sector industrial houses conduct their recruitment examinations and job interviews in English even for the junior clerical staff. The medium of instruction at the various staff training centres for banks, industry, insurance and finance corporations and business houses is English.

English continues to be the working language of all the industrial undertakings of the Government of India, public sector transport, civil aviation and communications industry.

2.1.6 English in social circles

English occupies an important position in Indian social circles as a means of communication at several formal and informal levels, particularly among people whose mother tongues are different. Educated Indians usually write their personal and business letters in English, read newspapers, magazines and books in English (Parasher 1979). Western music and English movies are quite popular in India, particularly among the youth. Similarly, literary and popular books in English have an extensive reading public in the country. In fact, the English language and to some extent certain aspects of western life style have become inseparable parts of an educated Indian's way of life. What is more, in certain social circles a good command of English is considered a mark of education, sophistication and rated high on the prestige scale.

2.1.7 Creative writing in English

Another important use of English in India is in creative writing. A sizable body of distinctly Indian literature, including poetry, is produced in English. This literature, along with Hindi and Sanskrit literatures, has a pan-Indian reading public. Indian writing in English is recognized as an academic discipline not only in Indian universities, but also in other parts of the world. Several stories and narratives written by Indian writers such as Rabindranath Tagore, Sarojini Naidu, R.K. Narayan, Raja Rao, Khushwant Singh, Kamala Das are included in English textbooks prescribed for study in schools, some in original and others in simplified versions. A large number of literary works produced in other languages is translated into English, in order to give it a wider readership. In fact, "Indian writing in English is but one of the voices in which India speaks. It is a new voice, no doubt, but it is as much Indian as others" (Iyengar 1962:3).

Other uses of English in India include spheres of Indian life such as the military services, the medical and legal professions, data processing and computing, telecommunications.

There is a general lack of documentation on the use of English in India. However, the evidence presented here indicates that in spite of the policy decision taken at the political level, English continues to be used and will continue to be used for several walks of national life. It is for this reason that English continues to be taught and learnt in schools and universities.

2.2 English in Indian educational system

2.2.1 English in school system

Teaching English in Indian schools is a massive enterprise. In order to achieve the national objective of free and compulsory education upto the age of fourteen, there has been an unprecedented expansion of education during the post-independence period. The number of schools and student enrolment in them have shown tremendous growth during the past three decades (Table 7). Thus in terms of sheer numbers, a provision has to be made for teaching English to about 40 million students, as in most states the teaching of English begins at class 5/6 level and goes on for 5 to 7 years[1] (Kumar and Kumar 1986).

Table 7

Pupil enrolment in Indian Schools
1950-51 to 1982-83

Year	Enrolment in millions		
	Age group 6-11 (Classes 1 to 5)	Age group 11-14 (Classes 6 to 8)	Age group 14-17 (Classes 9 to 11/12)
1950-51	19.15	3.12	1.22
1955-56	25.17	4.20	1.88
1960-61	34.99	6.70	2.89
1965-66	50.47	10.53	5.04
1978-79	72.39	18.01	9.08
1982-83	91.20	28.80	(not available)

(Government of India 1980)

[1] Of course, in certain states English teaching begins at class 1 or 3 level and goes on for 8 to 12 years.

In addition to being a school subject, English is available as a medium of instruction in Indian schools all over the country. According to a survey, English as a medium of instruction at school is next only to Hindi "although the number of states and union territories where English is the medium of instruction is greater than the number of states and union territories where Hindi is the medium" (Chaturvedi and Mohale 1976:45). In certain parts of India English is a major medium while in most states it is a subordinate medium.

It is difficult to estimate how many students actually opt for English as their medium of education in states and union territories where it is available as a subordinate medium because of lack of documentation. However, where English is a major medium, it is understood that most of the school-going population studies through it. My guess is that more students study through the medium of English in non-Hindi areas than in Hindi areas.

There are several English-medium 'public schools', spread all over the country, most of them residential and patronised mainly by the affluent sections of the society. The government of India too runs a chain of schools all over the country, called 'Central Schools' and 'Sainik Schools'[1] in which both Hindi and English are available as media of education. Except for social studies and Indian languages, these schools teach through the medium of English. Because of competition all the English-medium schools can select their student population. This has created a great demand for English medium schools and several new ones have recently been opened in the private sector.

2.2.2 English in higher education

During the past four decades, there has been a tremendous growth in the number of universities and student enrolment in them. As we saw in the Table 1 'B' number of universities at the end of 1975-76 was 121 and student enrolment 3,400,000. The enrolment figure must certainly be around 4 million now.

In spite of policy decisions, English occupies a prominent position in higher education in India. Here are some facts gathered from the Universities Handbook for 1983-84 (Association

[1] A Sainik School is a preparatory school for entry into the armed forces.

of Indian Universities 1984):

i. Out of 94 universities offering undergraduate courses in Arts, 55 (74.3%) had English as a medium of teaching. English was not available as a medium of instruction in 9 universities.

ii. 15 universities had only English as the medium of instruction even at the undergraduate level.

iii. Out of 94 universities offering postgraduate courses in Arts, 76 (84.5%) provided for instruction and examination through the medium of English. In 41 universities English was the only medium of instruction and examination.

iv. Out of 86 universities and institutes of science and technology offering postgraduate courses, English was the only medium of teaching and examination in 57 (66.3%); others provided for English and the regional language or Hindi as media of instruction and examination.

v. English was the sole medium of instruction and examination in all the university faculties of engineering, technology and medicine all over the country.

vi. All Indian universities offered courses in English language and/or literature at the undergraduate level.

vii. Almost all Indian universities provided for the teaching of English literature/language at the postgraduate level.

The pattern of compulsory English teaching varies from state to state. However, in most universities English is taught at least for 2 years on a compulsory basis, in addition to elective English. In Hindi-speaking regions the study of English has been made optional. It is interesting to note that even at the postgraduate level the number of students opting for courses in English increased during the sixties despite uncertainty about the place of English in the educational system (Table 8).

Table 8

Postgraduate enrolment in English in Indian universities (1961-62 to 1971-72)

Year	M.A.	Ph.D.
1961-62	5,192	146
1962-63	5,785	145
1965-66	7,180	186
1968-69	9,769	402
1971-72	11,404	453

(UGC 1976:529-30)

2.2.3 English in all-India level institutions

The Union Government has established a few 'Central' universities in the country. In these universities both English and Hindi are available as media of instruction and examination. But for all practical purposes these are English medium institutions. Similarly, in other all-India level institutes of higher learning such as the Indian Institutes of Technology, Indian Institute of Science, English is the sole medium of instruction. Again, English is the only medium of instruction at several all-India level institutions providing in-or pre-service training for example, Military Academies, several institutions under the Indian Council of Medical Research, Council of Scientific and Industrial Research and several staff training institutions run by the government, industry, big business, banks, railways, airlines and finance corporations. Furthermore, English is the only medium available for all-India level seminars, symposia and conferences. Until recently, English alone was the medium of competitive examinations conducted by the Union and State Public Service Commissions. Now Hindi and the regional languages have been made available for competitive examinations for entrance to civil services, but most of the candidates opt for English.

2.3 Functions of English vis-a-vis Indian languages

The above discussion shows that in spite of policy pronouncements to assign English a secondary role in Indian society, English bilingualism became more widespread during the post-independence period. It is an established sociolinguistic fact that nobody learns a second language unless there is a need to use it for communication in certain social situations. The fact that English continues to be learned and taught in India on such a large scale shows that people still need to use it. My evidence also shows that English is widely used in India in a variety of situations. Of course, English has not succeeded in driving indigenous languages out of use as it did in countries like the USA, Canada and Australia. What we have

in India is a situation of prolonged bilingualism in which the indigenous languages seem to have acquired societal functions 'complementary' to one another. This view is evident from a recent study of educated bilinguals' language use, the findings of which show that the bilinguals' languages are functionally differentiated. The mother tongue or the first language tends to be the most dominant in the 'domain' of family, while English dominates the domains of education, employment and government. In the domains of neighbourhood, friendship and transactions, English, Hindi and regional languages are used, depending on the situation (Parasher 1980). However, the evidence is limited and more research is called for.

2.4 Mis-match between language policy and language use

The foregoing discussion shows that there is a contradiction between the stated policies and the language use situation as far as English is concerned. As I have shown in Section I, the Constitution envisaged the replacement of English by Hindi for the official purposes of the Union and as the language of communication between the states and Union as well as between one state and another. This task was to be completed within a period of 15 years. But owing to several factors discussed above, it could not be achieved and ultimately resulted in the passing of the Official Languages (Amendment) Act 1967, making English the 'associate official language' for an unspecified time. However, the evidence presented in the preceding sections shows that English still occupies, for all practical purposes, the position of the official language of the union. In the states too English continues to be used as the official language, particularly in the South.

An examination of some of the educational documents shows that educational policy envisaged the replacement of English by Hindi and other regional languages as media of instruction both at school and in higher education. But again the actual use situation is contrary to the stated policy goals. The evidence presented here shows that English is taught for about 5 to 6 years or more at school and in several parts of the country English is available as a major medium of instruction,

while in others it is a subordinate medium. The increasing number of privately managed English-medium schools and the clamour for admissions to them are indications of the amount of premium put on education through the medium of English. Moreover, English language holds an important position in higher education. In several universities the medium of instruction continues to be English, particularly in the field of science and technology. Thus English has come to occupy 'complementary' functions vis-a-vis Indian languages, a kind of diglossic situation (Parasher 1980). It appears that the situation is not going to change very much in the near future and English will continue to be used for certain specific functions even after Hindi and regional languages take over as official languages and media of education.

3.0 ELT Situation in India

3.1 Stated and implicit aims of teaching English

Although teaching English in India is a massive enterprise, there has been a lack of clarity in defining its aims and objectives. According to the Education Commission the aim of teaching English is to enable the students to use it as a 'library language' in the field of higher education:

> As English will, for a long time to come, continue to be needed as a 'library language' in the field of higher education, a strong foundation will have to be laid at the school stage.
>
> (Government of India 1966:342)

Such a policy statement would naturally imply that the main objective of teaching English should be to impart good reading ability and referencing skills in the English language. But elsewhere in the Report the Commission recommends that a universi graduate should "be able to express himself with reasonable ease and felicity, understand lectures in it and avail himself of its literature" (Government of India 1966:26). This kind of ambiguity in defining the aims and objectives of teaching English can be observed in most of the educational documents published in India during the past few decades.

Although most of the investigating bodies realise that there is a need to teach English in India, their recommendations are always far from being explicit. As a result the reports of these commissions and study groups often get cited for

arguments in favour of higher objectives for teaching English as well as lower objectives. What is more, such catch phrases as 'library language', 'additional language', 'third language' get interpreted to support the argument that English has a very limited role to play in India and hence there is no need to teach compulsory English at school or university. This adds to the already prevailing confusion on the issue. Sometimes, even the specialized committees and study groups give incompatible suggestions. For example, consider the following pronouncement of the Study Group appointed to review the ELT situation in the country:

> Modern Indian languages should be firmly established as media in most of our universities by 1975, the last year of the Fifth Five-Year Plan.
>
> (Government of India 1967:64)

And now compare it with the objectives the Group laid down for a lower level English course for school leavers which expects a student to

i. understand a talk on a subject within his experience, provided the pace of the talk is not too fast and that unusual words or expressions are avoided;

ii. reply intelligibly in speech in English, to straightforward questions, within his experience;

iii. read with fluency and understand a simple passage of prose in English; and

iv. express himself with a reasonable degree of accuracy in speech and in writing in English on subjects within his linguistic experience.

In addition to this lower level course which should be taught compulsorily to all secondary school students, the Group recommended a higher level course at the end of which a pupil should be able to:

i. understand a talk (including a radio or taperecorded talk) on a subject of general interest within his experience;

ii. (a) carry out a natural conversation with clarity of expression on a topic within his experience;

(b) arrange, present and explain his ideas intelligently on a topic selected by him;

iii. understand the main statements or ideas in a written passage and be able to reproduce them in the order in which they are given, in a simple workmanlike manner; and

iv. express himself in writing with relevance and accuracy on:

(a) a subject of general interest within his experience; and

(b) a topic chosen from a subject within the curriculum which entails vocabulary relating specially to that branch of knowledge.

(Government of India 1967:68-69)

As regards teaching English at university the Study Group recommended that

> compulsory English should be taught throughout the three-year degree course, for six periods a week during the first two years and for three periods a week during the third year.
>
> (Government of India 1967:71)

In addition to the compulsory English course, the Group suggested the continuation of the subsidiary (elective) English course with the revision that it should include a course unit on a linguistic description of the language. It recommended that those who specialise in subsidiary English should take up the higher level course in compulsory English and not the lower level. Another recommendation of the Study Group was to introduce advanced topics in the Phonetics of English and in Structural Linguistics with reference to English, in addition to a common core of literature. In sum, although the Study Group made a policy statement in favour of the regional languages, it in effect supported the maintenance of the status quo on English teaching in the country with certain additional measures to ensure better teaching of the language.

As the ELT situation, particularly in the Hindi-speaking states, became very fluid during the late sixties and early seventies, another Study Group was appointed to review the situation. It also made a policy pronouncement in favour of Indian languages:

> As a free nation we are committed to the enrichment of Indian languages so that they may serve all those purposes for which we now use English.
>
> (Government of India 1971:8)

It laid emphasis on the "role of English as a 'source' language" and "the place of English as a 'link' with the outside world for the acquisition of new knowledge" (ibid.:9). To use English as a 'source' language it suggested the teaching of translation skills at intermediate and advanced stages. For an effective use of English as a 'link' with the outside world, it suggested that the students should be able to use it in the library. Therefore, the student must learn how to read meaningfully all that appears in his field of study, must become an effective note-taker and must master the art of successful reading with speed and comprehension.

As envisaged by the Education Commission, a complete switchover to regional languages as media of education was to be achieved by the end of 1975, which did not happen. Our evidence suggests that this target is difficult to achieve in the near future. It was perhaps for this reason that the National Workshop on Syllabus Reform recommended that "English should be taught as a compulsory subject for a minimum period of two years to B.A., B.Com., and B.Sc., students (UGC 1977:1).

What emerges from this discussion is that there is no consistency between the stated national objectives and the implicit aims of teaching English. This is similar to, and to a large extent a result of, the mis-match between the official language policy and actual language use in public life. This dichotomy becomes evident in the deliberations of the various investigating bodies. Caught in the dilemma, they strike a compromise between extreme positions. As a result the 'great debate' on the status and role of teaching English and its place in the educational system goes on. Consequently, the ELT profession has remained in utter confusion and there has been a general lack of enthusiasm on its part to introduce reforms and innovations in the field.[1]

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[1] This of course, excludes individual efforts.

3.2 English syllabuses, methods and materials

3.2.1 Syllabuses

A typical English language (what is known as General English) syllabus at an Indian university consists of one or two texts for 'detailed' study and a number of 'rapid' or 'supplementary' readers. From the texts prescribed for detailed study, passages for 'explanation with reference to the context' are set, in addition, of course to general questions testing the comprehension of the content. From the supplementary readers, only general content questions are asked in the examination. General questions on content were essay-type until recently, but now short answer and multiple choice questions are also set. Certain topics in applied English grammar are also prescribed in the syllabuses. The students are tested mainly on their knowledge of grammar rules manifested in their ability to manipulate isolated sentences, rather than their ability to use the language in certain communicative situations. In the second and third years, students are expected to do some exercises in precis and essay writing also. In some universities translation is also prescribed, but it is going out of fashion, particularly owing to some teachers' interest in linguistics and modern methods of teaching language.

3.2.2 Teaching materials: language teaching

In many states and Union territories the textbooks produced by the Central Institute of English and Foreign Languages and published by the National Council of Educational Research and Training have been adopted at the primary and secondary levels. But university level textbooks are varied. Some universities prescribe the CIEFL textbooks, while a majority of them prescribe their own textbooks. Usually, undergraduate courses in English have two 'types' of texts -- those meant for detailed study and others for non-detailed study. Detailed study texts usually include selections of short stories, essays, one-act-plays, travelogues and poetry, some of them in original while others simplified. Units are

sometimes followed by exercises on grammar, usage and vocabulary. Simplified and retold literary classics usually get prescribed for non-detailed study, often called Supplementary Readers.

But most universities include literary classics in their text materials and quite often expect the learners to appreciate the content with little or hardly any attention being given to the language.

For example, a textbook prescribed for general English (i.e. proficiency in English language) includes poems like Pope's 'Belinda's Toilet', Gray's 'Elegy' and Milton's sonnet on his '23rd Birthday'. What is more, the editors draw the attention of the adolescent learners to niceties of 'bank verse', 'iambic feet', 'dramatic monologue' and 'Petrarchan Sonnet' rather than help them acquire the ability to use English in day-to-day situations. Of course, the same university has a help-book with a modern title: Communication Skills in English which includes information and exercises on spelling, punctuation, grammar and writing skills. But it is the textbook with literary pieces that gets 'taught' in the class (Osmania University 1983 and 1984).

3.2.3 Teaching materials: Literature teaching

Most universities attach a lot of importance to and spend enormous energy in the teaching of English literature. Undergraduate courses in English Literature are given at almost all the affiliated colleges and university departments of English. The content of the course comprises fiction, drama, prose and poetry. Nineteenth century fiction upto and including Thomas Hardy, plays of Shakespeare, Romantic and Victorian poetry are most favoured. The history of English literature and an introduction to literary genres are also included in the course, usually in the final year.

Most university departments of English and some affiliated colleges offer postgraduate courses in English literature. Most of the students who do these courses become teachers of English either in secondary schools or in universities and colleges. Postgraduate literature courses are oriented towards 17th, 18th and 19th century literature. A few literary masterpieces

produced in the 20th century upto the 50's and 60's are also included in the syllabus. Some universities structure their syllabuses along historical lines, while others genre-wise. The history of English literature and literary criticism are also included in the course. Some of the universities have a language paper in their M.A. course to expose the students to a study of English syntax and phonology with an introduction to general linguistics. Optional courses in Indo-Anglian and American literature are also included in the M.A. syllabus in most universities.

Research facilities are inadequate in most of the universities, although several students and staff register for research degrees. The most favourite topics relate to 19th and 20th century fiction and Indo-Anglian literature. American literature has become fashionable recently. An average research thesis is usually an evaluation of the works of a literary artist mostly from secondary sources. A few universities have now begun to provide facilities for courses and research in the fields of applied linguistics and ELT.

3.2.4 Teaching methods

Since most syllabuses in language and literature do not specify objectives and are silent about teaching methods, teachers are free to adopt whatever methods they like. This would seem an ideal condition for the teacher to adopt an effective method depending on its practicability in the particular teaching situation, but actually what happens is that most college and university teachers resort to an explanation of the text and lecturing. The teacher reads the text in the class and the students listen to it with their textbooks open. Then the teacher paraphrases the text line by line using the teacher's variety of English most of the time; sometimes the 'meaning' is explained in the mother tongue or a code-mixed variety of the mother tongue and English. After a piece of the text is thus 'explained' the teacher sometimes does the language exercises given at the end of the text unit and proceeds to the next unit. There is no scope for the learner to participate in what goes on in the class. In the

the literature class also the same method is followed for teaching poetry and drama, while fiction is taught by lecturing on the theme and the technique of the prescribed text. At the postgraduate level the number of general lectures on the author and his works outnumber 'text explication'. At the end of the year the teacher gives notes keeping the examination in view.

3.2.5 Teachers

All the teachers of English are non-native speakers of English who learned English as a second language through formal teaching. Although school teachers are supposed to possess some kind of training qualifications, college and university teachers are not required to obbain any teaching degree or diploma.[1] Opportunities for training in native-English-speaking countries are very very rare. Although a large majority of teachers have a good second or first class postgraduate degree in English and their competence in the language is fairly high, they need training in applied linguistics and the methods of teaching English as a second language. A negligible minority of the country's English teachers have received some training, either by residence or through the distance mode, imparted by the CIEFL. Recently, a few academic staff colleges have come up, which are in the process of planning their short-term in-service courses.

3.3 Recent developments in ELT planning

Recently there has been a renewed interest in the teaching and learning of English, partifularly in the Hindi-speaking areas of the country. Therefore, a lot of planning needs to be done to introduce effective measures to improve the teaching and learning of English to make it relevant to the needs of the society. Recent thinking in academic circles has focussed on the fast-changing needs and demands of the society. The new education policy statements note that "the courses offered by the universities have not been reorganized to meet the demands of the times (Government of India 1986) and draw attention to the need for a "common core curriculum" (Government of India 1985). Following the guidelines prepared by the UGC, a

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[1] Only a few universities insist on a Diploma in the Teaching of English from the CIEFL. The UGC, however, has made the CIEFL Diploma a desirable qualification for University teachers.

Curriculum Development Centre (CDC) was set up in 1985 at the CIEFL, which has recently proposed a model curriculum for teaching English at the university levels. It suggests two core courses in English at the undergraduate level: (1) General English (Compulsory for all undergraduate students), and (2) Special English (elective). The general English course lays emphasis on developing the learner's communication skills and the Special English Course aims at developing literary sensibility, knowledge of language and communicative skills. It also provides for certain need-based employment-oriented modules such as English for Business Communication, Advertising, Secretarial Practice, Competitive Examinations. At the post-graduate level it suggests a set of six core and a large number of elective courses (Sethi 1988).

What is important about the proposals of the CDC is that a much-needed national perspective on ELT has emerged. Since the recommendations were formulated at national-level workshops under the auspices of the UGC, their implementation at various universities should hopefully be easy. The CDC report includes detailed guidelines for teaching materials, methods and teacher training. Without giving emphasis to any particular approach, the CDC suggests an eclectic approach in all its recommendations. The CDC report is under publication by the UGC and it is hoped that the universities will soon adopt the curricula suggested. Of course, the materials have to be prepared and teachers have to be trained in using these materials.

3.4 Concluding remarks

To sum up, what I have tried to do in this paper is to concentrate on the macro-level considerations of ELT planning in India. I have shown that the absence of a clearly stated uniform policy on the teaching of English is a direct consequence of a mis-match between the stated official language policy and language use in the country. While the stated official position on the role of English is that it is a 'subsidiary' official language of the Union of India, in effect English is used for most governmental and societal functions. What is often ignored by most planners is that English, Hindi and regional languages

have acquired specific societal functions and thus there is no conflict either between English and Hindi or English and regional languages; they actually have complementary functions (Parasher 1980). The planning of teaching English as a second language in India must take into consideration these societal functions of English in the multilingual setting. Although the ELT profession has been aware of these functions, there has been a general lack of a national perspective on the teaching of English which has recently begun to emerge.

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